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Rockets take Ming in draft

Bulls take Williams with second pick

NEW YORK (AP) — Yao Ming of China, a 7-foot-5 center who gained clearance from his national federation to play in the NBA only hours earlier, was selected first overall by the Houston Rockets in the draft Wednesday night.

It marked the first time a foreign player who did not play in college in the United States went No. 1 in the draft.

The choice was expected, although the Rockets went through a few nervous days leading up to the draft while they waited to learn whether Yao would receive clearance from his national team. Yao had earlier reached a severance agreement with his professional team, the Shanghai Sharks.

The Chinese federation was concerned about Yao's availability for national team commitments, but an agreement was reached earlier Wednesday. Yao did not attend the draft at Madison Square Garden. He was in Beijing for training with his national team for an upcoming four-nation tournament.

Yao shared high-fives and handshakes with his family as commissioner David Stern announced the pick.

"The whole franchise want-

ed this so badly. I just felt that it would all be worked out," Houston general manager Carroll Dawson said.

Jay Williams, a junior guard from Duke who was the national player of the year, went second to the Chicago Bulls. Williams gave hugs rather than handshakes to his family before donning a Bulls cap and walking onstage.

This marked the second straight year the Bulls got the second overall pick. A year ago, they acquired teen-ager Tyson Chandler from the Los Angeles Clippers for Elton Brand in a major draft-night deal.

This year's draft had no shortage of trade talk, either, with several teams trying to move into the top 10 or acquire one of the veterans — including Antonio McDyess, Andre Miller and Baron Davis — whose names had been prominently mentioned in trade rumors throughout the day.

Mike Dunleavy of Duke went third to the Golden State Warriors, learning of his selection as he sat stage left with his father, former NBA player and coach Mike Dunleavy.

The draft was expected to start getting interesting beginning with the fourth pick, with newly hired Memphis Grizzlies president Jerry West set to make his first personnel move for a team other than the Los Angeles Lakers.

Other team executives said

West had been working feverishly for the past several days trying to line up a series of moves.

West chose Drew Gooden of Kansas, a 6-foot-10 junior power forward and first-team All-America selection. The Big 12 Player of the Year, who averaged 19.9 points last season, would join a Grizzlies frontcourt that already includes Shane Battier and Rookie of the Year Pau Gasol.

Denver, choosing fifth on a day when McDyess trade rumors were rampant, chose center Nikoloz Tskitishvili of Benetton Treviso in Italy.

The 19-year-old Tskitishvili was the first teen-ager selected. A year ago, high school seniors comprised four of the first eight picks.

There was only one high school senior expected to be drafted in this year's first round, but it also seemed likely that only a handful of college seniors would be among the first 28 picks.

Dajuan Wagner of Memphis went sixth to the Cleveland Cavaliers, a clear signal that the trade talk surrounding Miller — the NBA assists leader last season — was legitimate. Cleveland has told Miller it does not want to offer him a contract extension for another year, and several teams have been contacting the Cavs to make offers — most notably the Los Angeles Clippers.

Memorial

Continued from page 5

This time, the focal point was a podium on the pitcher's mound where Kile made his living.

Harnisch, who had known Kile since 1991, recalled Kile as a no-hitter in 1993 with the Astros as a highlight of both of their careers.

"I can remember it as if it was yesterday," Harnisch said. "I never wanted something like that to happen to someone so much. I told him then and I tell you now, it was my greatest thrill in the game."

Drabek, who like Harnisch pitched with Kile on the Astros in the 1990s, also spoke of Kile's clubhouse leadership.

"I was an only child, so growing up I figured I'd never have a brother and sister," Drabek said. "How so wrong I was."

Veres, who was with Kile on the Astros, Rockies and Cardinals, read from scriptures and added a personal note. "Everybody knew on Earth that Darryl was a heavenly being. He is finally being crowned with the glory and honor he deserves," Williams read the closing prayer.

Several players tried to lighten the mood a bit, talking about Kile's golf game.

"DK, I hope they have wide fairways up there," Drabek said, "because we all know you need it."

Several hundred fans, many wearing Cardinal red and carrying signs and banners, were waiting when the gates opened about a half-hour before the service began. Don Mattingly wore a Cardinals cap with the initials "JFB" written on one side in tribute to Buck and "DK" on the other.

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